

## Andrew Jackson to Thomas Pinkney, December 11, 1813, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

TO THOMAS PINCKNEY.

Fort Strother, December 11, 1813.

*Sir:* I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 16th. Nov. dated at Charleston, and your instructions of the same date; together with your letter of the 29th. November dated at Milledgeville—all handed me last evening by your express, Mr Cooper.

Having been advised by Gov. Blount that you had been ordered to take the direction of the expedition against the hostile Creeks I immediately wrote you on the 3d. Inst; acquainting you with my operations up to that date. This letter I sent to Genl. Cocke to be, by him, forwarded to you by Express. On the 8th. Inst, I wrote you again; and sent the letter by a friendly Indian, direct through the Creek nation. The object of this letter was to procure from you, as soon as practicable, any plan you might have formed for conducting the war; and particularly to learn at what point you might wish a junction of our forces to be formed, if you should desire such a measure at all. In sending this letter through the nation I had a double motive—that it might reach you in the shortest time, and that I might acquire the most correct information of the situation and force of the enemy.

I am happy to find, from your letter of instructions, that my ideas correspond so well with yours, as to the proper mode of prosecuting the war. It is certainly correct that a mere temporary incursion into the enemy's country will not produce those beneficial and lasting effects for which this expedition was designed, and which our government expects. I have omitted no means in my power to render the Campaign permanently useful; and for this

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purpose I have established a depot for supplies on the Tennessee river, at a point which you will find marked on the draft which I send you, Ft Deposit; and another at this place, which you will also find laid down on the draft. I expected, before this to have made an establishment at the confluence of the Coosa, and Tallapoosa; and should certainly have done so, but for the causes which are stated in my letter to you of the 3d. I am happy to find you have thought of that place as a proper one for the junction of our forces and for the establishment of a garrison. I consider it admirably fitted for both these purposes; and so soon as I recommence operations I shall move thither with as little delay as practicable.

Had I been able to follow up immediately the victory at Talladega, the enemy would never have been able to recover from their defeat. I am well assured I could have cut them up by detachments before they could have re embodied in any formidable force. But I was compelled by the want of supplies, as well as for the protection of my rear, to hasten back to this place; and to my astonishment and mortification I found on my arrival here, the same scarcity which had compelled me to return. Discontents arose among the men which it was impossible to remove without removing the cause which produced them; and I was obliged to march the greater part of them back to Ft Deposit. But their minds having become soured by privations, and their faces being turned towards home, it was exceedingly difficult, or rather utterly impossible to reconcile them entirely.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Judge John Catron, justice of the U. S. Supreme Court 1838–1865, a serjeant-major in Colonel Martin's regiment in 1813, had this to say, in 1817 (Martin's *Self-Vindication*, p. 27), in regard to the cause of the mutinous feeling at Fort Strother: "All things continued quiet until the army returned to Fort Strother (I think the twelfth of November), from Talladega, where there were no provisions in camps. We had been for the twenty preceding days extremely straitened for provisions, and for the three days preceding our return to camp, literally without eating, and had done *very hard service*; waded Coosa, a half mile wide, up to the middle, on an extreme frosty night, with certain expectations of warm fires and plenty to eat being ready for us ' *at home*', a mile below the crossing. The consequence of not a ration being in camps, was, threats of marching off to Deposit,

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where something to eat might be had; and this was by all the army; but a little flour coming in, it was prevented, for, I think, three or four days; at which time, the General promised the troops, if no provisions came on, they should march; this accordingly took place, though your regiment, meeting provisions twelve or fourteen miles from camp, the second day, returned. This excitement should be charged to a hungry appetite, and not to the misconduct of any one."

Other causes of discontent besides those which grew out of the scarcity, have obtained very extensively and very injuriously in my camp. The volunteers who enrolled themselves under the acts of Congress of the 6th of February and 6th of July 1812 and who compose a part of my present army believe that their term of service expired on the 10th. Inst, *that* being 12 months from the day they were mustered into service; altho they have been the greater part of the time out of service. They consider their former dismissal as tantamount to a final discharge; and at all events, they say, the time having once begun to run must continue to run on until the expiration of the term for which they had pledged themselves. Not considering myself empowered to discharge them, strong symptoms of mutiny have manifested themselves which I have found great difficulty in restraining.

I have sent back to Tennessee for the purpose of raising a new corps of volunteers; and I am very sanguine in the hope that the measure will succeed.

I found it necessary after I had returned from Telladega to send Genl. Coffee's brigade of Cavalry and mounted gunmen into Madison to recruit their horses. When it left me it was something upwards of a thousand strong, and will return as strong, I have no doubt, as it left me.

Genl. Cocke will form a junction with me tomorrow; and so soon afterwards as I obtain supplies to authorise it, I shall recommence the campaign and prosecute it with the utmost vigour. At present I have no supplies of bread-stuff, and the quantity on the way is much less, I am fearful, than I supposed it to be when I wrote you on the 8th. I ordered the

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contractors a fortnight ago, to furnish, without delay, thirty days rations at this place—forty days at Telladega, and forty at the junction of the Coosa and Tallapoosa. How faithfully this requisition will be complied with, I cannot venture a conjecture. Their most positive assurances no longer afford a ground on which even an opinion can be hazarded. I have been incessantly urging them and using every other means in my power to procure a sufficient supply to enable me to prosecute the campaign to a successful termination. Barckly McGee of E. Tennessee who had contracted with Gov. Blount to furnish me and who received a loan of 15000 dollars from the Nashville Bank for this purpose, has neither supplied me with a pound of any thing, nor even let me hear a word from him. This is the more astonishing from the facility with which bread-stuff might be procured in East Tennessee and forwarded by water to Ft Deposit.

The advantages of a water-carriage, for the purposes of such an expedition, over waggons and pack-horses, are certainly very great; but after they arrive at Ft Deposit, my supplies must I am apprehensive, be transported by means of the latter. This river is navigable a considerable distance above, but at this place there are obstructions, and there are others between this and its junction with the Tallapoosa which will probably render it of little value for the transportation of supplies to that point.

I regret exceedingly that there has been hitherto, so little concert in the operations of our respective armies; and as I have endeavoured heretofore, so I shall continue to endeavour to establish a more harmonious cooperation.

The uncertainty as to the arrival of supplies puts it out of my power to say at what time I shall recommence my movements. I hope however, (and I dare venture nothing more than a hope), I shall be enabled to do so in a few days. I have just learned that there are between three and four hundred barrels of flour at Ft Armstrong which Genl. Cocke is said to have ordered on.

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The volunteers who are now in my army are resolved not to cross the river when I recommence my movements; it will therefore be necessary, for reasons of policy, to permit those to return immediately who are disaffected and determined not to march and await in the settlements, the discharge of their government. The fault I believe has been principally with their officers; and I still hope that many of the men will remain, after they are privileged to return. At all events I hope their places will be soon supplied by others to be raised in Tennessee.

So soon as there is a sufficiency of supplies to justify a movement I shall order on Genl. Coffee's brigade from Madison. Indeed his present orders are to come on with the supplies when he finds them furnished there.

The fort which I have erected at this place, as well as that which I erected at Deposit will be of great value for the reception and protection of our future supplies; and I shall therefore keep them up. Should it be found practicable to use this stream for the purposes of transportation to the Hickory ground, the value of a fort at this place will be very much enhanced; but in any event, its utility will be very great, and indeed indispensable. Somewhere near the junction of the Coosa and Tallapoosa, is certainly the point at which a strong position should be taken, and from which excursions should be made into the surrounding country; and through the medium of posts which I shall establish in this direction, I have no doubt, when things have once gotten properly into operation that ample supplies can at all times be furnished there. Such a position will besides have the advantage of a safe and easy communication with mobile point by means of the river, which is at all times navigable below the junction, for vessels of considerable burthen; and from which point a certain supply can at all times be calculated on.

The adjutant Genl forwards to you a report of the strenth and condition of the troops now under my command. It must not however be considered as perfectly correct, as the number of desertions, and the inaccurate returns which have been made to him, occassioned by the want of attention in some, and the want of knowledge in others, render

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it impossible to furnish such a one at this time. Genl. Cocke having not yet advised me of the number, condition, or lenth of service of his troops, I am unable to inform you what will be my augmented strength after he shall have formed a junction with me. Such a statement however shall be forwarded, agreeably to your order, at as early a day as possible.

I send today, one of my confidential officers into the settlements to purchase bread-stuff.

I have the honour to be with great respect yr. obt st.

P.S. 12th. I have this moment heard that Genl. Coffee is coming on which is a proof that supplies are on the way. I hope I may be able to take up the line of march by the 15th.